

Western Reserve Land Conservancy ("WRLC") is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization with the mission to provide the people of the region with natural assets through land conservation and restoration. Their vision is to create thriving, prosperous communities nourished by vibrant natural lands, working farms and healthy cities.

WRLC has offered a sum of \$410,000 to purchase Theiss Woods for conservation. Should this bid be accepted, the city of Akron would transfer the property to WRLC with the potential to be donated to another conservation organization such as Summit Metro Parks after permanent conservation restrictions or easements were placed on the site. Any eventual allowable activities will align with a typical passive use public park.



WRLC's proposal addressed three main reasons why Theiss Woods should be conserved:

1.) More Residential Housing Is Unnecessary

- Studies indicate new housing is not needed in the area, as 13% of housing units in the Merriman Valley are currently unoccupied.
- Meanwhile, vacant lots comprise approximately 18% (17,000 parcels) of the city of Akron, which the WRLC would gladly assist Akron in working to rebuild and revitalize.
- There is strong public support among area residents for conservation of this property, along with a long term strategic plan for the Valley area in general



2.) Economic Impact

While some costs may be absorbed by the initial developers, continued maintenance costs will fall upon potential homeowners and/or the city's annual fund since this area requires new infrastructure.

These may include:

- Building and upkeep of roadways (two-lane asphalt road = \$580,000/mile, 14 year life expectancy)
- Building and upkeep of curbs and gutters (\$29/linear foot, 20 year life expectancy)
- Building and upkeep of sidewalks (\$43/linear foot, 25 year life expectancy)
- Additional water and sewer costs for newly built units (conservatively estimated at anywhere from \$37,000 - \$63,000)
- Flooding and storm water capture and treatment (over \$49,000 annually)

A 15-year tax abatement at the start of the project – when things are running optimally – also means that tax revenue will not be readily available for use to fix issues that arise down the road.

3.) Environmental Value

Theiss Woods consists of 45 acres of forest, including a healthy and relatively undisturbed six acre mature oak and hickory forest estimated to be approximately 110 years old.

These trees:

- Intercept over six million gallons of rainwater annually, diminishing flooding in nearby areas and saving over \$49,000/year in stormwater collection and treatment costs
- Remove more than 1.6 tons of pollutants, nitrogen oxides, particulate matter and volatile organic compounds from the air annually
- Would release significant amounts of carbon into the atmosphere if timbered



Theiss Woods also includes several small stream ravines and wetland terraces.

- Two small intermittent (small drainage warm water) streams lie within shallow ravines bisecting the forest and adding about 2,400 feet of waterward to the property
- Acquisition and protection of the property helps to establish a regional conservation corridor in the Mud Creek subwatershed, augmenting already protected natural areas. This provides an essential habitat for birds utilizing stream corridors as migratory flyaways.
- This area has already been known to flood in times of intense rainfall, a trend that is expected to increase with the effects of climate change. Developing within this area will only worsen these flooding habits.

The area is also home to numerous endangered plants and animals which are dependent upon large, well connected habitats for survival. Among the wildlife thought to be inhabiting the area are bats, smooth green snakes, the cerulean warbler, Virginia rail, American bittern, sora and common moorhen.

The WRLC conservation proposal is supported by Summit Metro Parks, the Conservancy for Cuyahoga Valley National Park, the Akron League of Women Voters, and the Ohio Environmental Council Action Fund. Additionally, the citizen-based coalition action group Preserve the Valley has acquired over 16,700 signatures from residents locally and around the country who support the conservation of this property.

To read the complete purchase proposal from WRLC, visit
preservethevalley.com